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ABSTRACT

In an era of increased governmental control and of inflation, the relationship between higher education and state legislatures is of some concern. The diverse units of higher education must identify the roles they are to play in the political process. A survey was undertaken to learn: how much weight the information provided by higher education has in the legislature; who has the most influence; and how pressure politics can be used to aid and support the goals of higher education. A questionnaire was sent to 100 randomly selected state representatives in 10 southeastern states, asking about the amount, weight, and use of information provided to them about community and junior colleges. The responses were tabulated and a comparison was made between the responses and the number of bills introduced into the state legislatures in 1976. Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of nine of the states. It was found that the sources of information are varied, and the amount of influence was partially determined by the number of people in and potential political influence of the group. The amount of information available was determined by the educational function of the group. The survey results are presented in narrated and tabular form. (MSE)

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"UTILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INFORMATION TO LEGISLATORS IN TEN SOUTHEASTERN STATES"

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THE STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS
AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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When I reviewed the themes of the first and second annual conferences, I found the thematic progression interesting. The first conference addressed an assessment of change in higher education; the second reviewed changing patterns of governance. This Third Annual Conference is now devoted to state legislative processes as they relate to higher education.

Increasing controls, social changes, rapid increases in technology, and inflation have made it necessary to examine the relationship higher education has with the source of funds and control of public, and some private, institutions of higher education. These annual conferences have focused our thinking to the pin-spot of necessary action--the state legislatures.

Today I have been asked to contribute to expanding Ben Lawrence's presentation, "Qualitative Approaches to Higher Education Management: An Assessment of Utility of Legislative Concerns." To do this, I would like to briefly discuss four points and share with you a practical example of "Qualitative Application."

First, the evolution of the term "Higher Educational Management" from the historical label "Higher Educational Administration" illustrates that a response is being generated to a criticism of higher education: the criticism of "crisis administration." According to Webster's Dictionary, administration is "the management or supervision of the use of a trust fund; a metering out; to give ritually; to furnish a benefit;" which implies a mechanical act of disbursement. Management, however, is defined as "the

judicious use of means to accomplish an end; the act or art of managing; the conducting or supervising; to handle or direct with a degree of skill; to alter by manipulation;" which implies a creative act or planned change which will support and develop creative arts and planned change.

As pointed out by Marvin Johnson at last year's conference, higher educational managers must "maintain a believable and supportable stance that demonstrates our good faith and reasonableness." I would suggest we must do more--we must prove our good faith and practicality. A task of this magnitude requires advanced planning to eliminate the "rat race" of crisis administration. This requires information which will support and develop creative acts and planned change.

Secondly, critics have been loud in charges of poor resources management and financial irresponsibility. These charges have been the result of administration rather than management.

Peter Drucker in his book Managing for Results says that "effective cost control requires a concentration of work and efforts on those few areas where improvements will have significant impact on performance and results" (page 12). The information needed to identify those few areas rarely is available in higher education. Either no information is available, or such a mass of data has accumulated that the information is useless. Improved efficiency in information systems is needed.

Third, traditional funding sources are maintaining spending levels, or slightly decreasing these levels, in a time of rather rampant inflation and increased costs. This condition has made it necessary for social service

agencies, including higher education, to compete among themselves for available funds to satisfy increased demands for services. Therefore, cost accounting and efficient allocation of those resources have forced higher education to become quite concerned with cost, both real and social, and with efficiency in managing the priorities of these resources. What does society want and how much is it willing to pay? This requires information not only for business cost accounting, but also for social cost accounting.

Fourth, higher education has been criticized for its "believability gap." This charge may well be the result of attempting to be all things to all people. The central problem in this charge is the reluctance of institutions to reevaluate and redefine goals and objectives in relation to rather rapid social and technological change. The Carnegie Commission, the professional organizations, and the institutional constituents have echoed these complaints. In order to identify and evaluate the changes in educational needs and in order to respond to these changes, higher education must establish an information base that provides accurate and useful insight into change and the validity of change.

These four points have been discussed and dissected at length for several years. Each institution, each type of institution, and each individual educational manager has addressed many methods and techniques for solutions. Yet, we are here today looking for another way--a second alternative, or a reordering of priorities.

This afternoon, I would like to submit for your consideration another tactic in the battle for improved effectiveness of communication with legislators which will serve to improve the Qualitative Utility of Higher Education

in the Legislative Process. We, the diverse units of higher education, must identify the role that we are to play in the political process itself. How much input do we have in decisions made by legislators. How much weight does information provided by us have in the legislature? Who does have the most influence on legislators and in legislatures? And, finally, how can we use other elements in pressure politics to aid and support the goals and objectives of higher education? This information is needed before we may even assess which specific information bits are needed for the goals and objectives of the missions of individual institutions. Effective use of information requires a market analysis be made for the information.

These questions were raised before last year, but were solidified and reinforced by a publication from the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University. Martovana and Nespoli completed a study entitled "State Legislation Relating to Community and Junior Colleges, 1976," which analyzed the legislative action in most states. A question arose: How did these legislators get information about the community and junior colleges in order to act on the legislation?

My efforts to find information which would answer this question proved fruitless. Therefore, I conducted a survey which would provide information that would enable me to make knowledgeable decisions about program design in Community Services and Continuing Education. Specifically, I needed to know which group had "the ear" of legislators and which groups had the most influence with legislators so that I could develop a program that would serve the community and create positive political attitudes. The practical technique of obtaining qualitative information is to conduct a survey of the people directly involved and ask them the questions, which is exactly what was done.

A questionnaire and cover letter was sent to 100 randomly selected State Representatives, 10 from each of 10 southeastern states (Table 1). First, each representative was asked to identify collectively the sources of information he had for community and/or junior colleges. Then, each respondent ranked fourteen types of groups in each of three functions: (1) the degree of influence each group had on the legislator's decisions about community or junior college legislation; (2) the amount of information each group made available to the legislator; and (3) the amount of information used by the legislator which was provided by the groups.

Each rank ordering was tabulated by assigning a weight of 14 to the number 1 position with descending weights to the subsequent ranks until position number 14 was weighted as 1. This was done for each set of functional responses.

The State Representatives surveyed were from the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. The percentage of response ranged from 0% in Georgia to 100% in Kentucky. The total sample average was 47%.

Upon tabulation of the questionnaires, a comparison was made between the number of responses to the survey and the number of bills introduced into the state legislature in 1976.

After these tabulations were completed, an attempt was made to directly contact at least one legislator in each state. Telephone interviews were conducted with the exception of one personal interview with a Kentucky legislator.

The findings of this survey are supported by the tabulations in Tables 2 through 5. Briefly, they are summarized as follows:

1. Sources of information are varied for legislators. Mass media contacts are mainly with newspapers and television. Personal contacts with lobbyists was rated as the least used source (Table 2).

2. The amount of influence perceived by the individual legislators was in part determined by the number of people represented by the group and potential political influence of the group (Table 3).

3. The amount of information made available to the legislators was determined by the educational function of the group (Table 4).

4. The amount of information used by the legislator was closely connected with the political representativeness of the group (Table 5).

5. Information from educational groups was readily available, but created little influence or utility to the legislators.

6. Community and civic organizations provided an average amount of influence, a small amount of information, but the information provided was perceived to be very useful to the legislators.

7. Business/industrial organizations and labor organizations were perceived to be very influential, with information more than moderately useful, but only moderate amounts of information was made available.

When interviewed via telephone or in person, the State Representatives were more willing to expand on specific questions.

The general consensus about the role lobbyists played (Table 2) were that they organized data from many sources that was extremely effective when presented in relation to a specific bill. The information was pre-packaged in A/V form and designed to make a point, but not to overkill. This information was for oral transmission only; none of the interviewees wanted any written response connecting them to lobbyists.

The legislators' comments about the use of educational sources of information generally were that the information presented was too bulky, cumbersome, and required too much time to reorganize. Most information was presented with the attitude, in the words of one legislator, "How dare you question this, when it's been researched!" Other comments were "...too dry," "...too much, too often," "...whining administrators," "...no political realism." The most generally used educational resource was the consultant under personal contract, or in a staff position.

The most effective and useful information about community and junior colleges were perceived to be direct contacts relating to specific programs, either designed to solve a specific problem or designed to provide support in solving a specific problem. Direct contacts with individual voters either through the mail or in the home district were the most positive forces. Other powerful forces were mass media coverage of events and public relations activities in relation to specific efforts to solve problems. Sports programs were moderately important; successful sports programs were slightly more important.

The results of this study provide an insight into the value of establishing contacts with local community groups, businesses, industries, labor organizations, alumni, and other social service organizations. The Community Service and Continuing Education functions of higher education can provide a very valuable tactic in designing a "defendable stance" in the legislature.

This study supports a program for the elements in higher education to establish an information system based on the community served. It makes no difference whether it is the community of the research university or the community of a small, community college. Higher education must be responsive to the needs of the community and make those needs known--then ask for help to provide the needs. Identify the successes and advertise those successes. Publicize the programs without hiding the shortcomings. Help the legislators make decisions by providing meaningful, well-prepared, efficient information. Participate in pressure politics by recruiting the community you serve or have served. Know your community and let the community know you. Advertise the availability of services.

These activities will result in improved relations when the institution can <u>prove</u> that it is operated by educational <u>managers</u>; that it does make resource allocations based on efficient and effective information; that it does evaluate social costs and benefits; and that it does respond to change in realistic and meaningful ways.

In short--"Don't hide your light under a bushel." It does pay to advertise.

TABLE 1

SURVEY RESPONDENTS IN 10 SOUTHEASTERN STATES RELATIVE TO LEGISLATION BY STATE, 1976

States in Survey	Legislators Surveyed	Legislator Responses	Legislators Interviewed	Legislative Bills in 1976*
Alabama	10	4	1	4
Florida	10	8	1	40
Georgia	10	0	0	(no resp.)
Kentucky	10	10	2	9
Louisiana	10	0	0	(no resp.)
Mississippi	10	8	1	21
North Carolina	10	3	0	5
South Carolina	10	5	1	5
Virginia	10	4	0	8
West Virginia	10	5	0	(no resp.)
TOTALS	100	47	6	92

* Martovana and Nespoli (1976)

TABLE 2

SOURCES OF LEGISLATOR INFORMATION RELATING TO COMMUNITY/JUNIOR COLLEGES (f = 47)

Source	Indiv. Resp.
Public Records, Hearings, Leg. Inquiries	47
Mass Media	47
Newspapers	35
Television	30
Radio	10
Magazines	12
Books	2
Professional Publications	21
Direct Mail (bulk permits)	41
Personal Contact with Constituents	47
Personal Contact with Representatives of Organiz.	45
Governmental (elected)	47
Governmental (appointed)	42
Political Action	47
Business/Industrial	47
Labor Organizations	31
Community Service	18
Social Service	17
Religious	12
Professional Education	5
Personal Contact with Lobbyists	3
Direct Mail (first class)	40
Professional Educational Consultants	33
Other Legislators	31

TABLE 3

RANK ORDER OF GROUPS BY AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE EACH IS PERCEIVED TO HAVE BY INDIVIDUAL LEGISLATORS

Rank	Group	# Resp.
1	Business/Industrial	585
2	Labor Organizations	582
3	Alumni	496
4	State Elected Boards	477
5	Community Groups	464
6	Local Elected Boards	439
7	Local Government Representatives	392
8	Civic Organizations	339
9	Social Service Agencies	298
10	State Appointed Boards	280
11	Professional Educational Organizations	225
12	Community/Junior College Representatives	140
13	Professional Educational Consultants	117
14	Local Appointed Boards	101

TABLE 4

RANK ORDER OF GROUPS BY AMOUNT OF INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUAL LEGISLATORS

Rank	Group	# Resp.
1	Professional Educational Organizations	497
2	Community College Representatives	491
3	State Elected Boards	486
4	State Appointed Boards	475
5	Labor Organizations	432
6	Professional Educational Consultants	430
7	Business/Industrial	429
8	Local Elected Boards	389
9	Civic Organizations	315
10	Community Groups	291
11	Social Service Agencies	253
12	Local Government Representatives	243
13	Alumni	158
14	Local Appointed Boards	66

TABLE 5

RANK ORDER OF GROUPS BY AMOUNT OF
PROVIDED INFORMATION USED
BY INDIVIDUAL LEGISLATORS

Rank	Group	# Resp.
1	Community Groups	589
2	Civic Organizations	571
3	Business/Industrial	507
4	Labor Organizations	494
5	Alumni	462
6	Local Elected Boards	375
7	State Elected Boards	357
8	Local Governmental Representatives	351
9	Social Service Agencies	336
10	Community College Representatives	262
11	Professional Educational Organizations	241
12	Professional Educational Consultants	216
13	State Appointed Boards	109
14	Local Appointed Boards	65

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